

friend from Virginia just raised this little issue about the Internet tax, and nobody is suggesting we tax the Internet. We will save that for another day. We can have another date—just the two of us—on that subject. We need to do that based on facts.

I will say that I think this is a good exchange of views. My colleague from Arizona and I, with our caucuses, have created an opportunity—and we will try to do this each month—which allows us to exchange views on specific subjects. I think it merits additional opportunities in the Senate, and I will be pleased in the coming months when we are in session to work with my friend, Senator KYL, to find additional topics and debaters and to further advance discussions on public policy in our country.

I yield the floor.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I, too, thank our four debaters this evening, and especially my colleague from North Dakota, Senator DORGAN. He and I chair the policy committees of our respective conferences. We decided that too much of our debate in this body wasn't very civil or very much in the way of debate because we were frequently talking to an empty Chamber. We basically were talking past each other rather than engaging with each other.

The best way for the American people to understand our different philosophies and actually test ideas was to see us in a situation in which, like tonight, you saw questions being asked of each other and the responses being given at that same period, the rebuttals and the replies in proximity to each other, so that these ideas could be evaluated in a context of real meaning, rather than the way the debate frequently occurs here. That is not to denigrate our colleagues in the way we conduct other debates, but we think that by having this kind of an opportunity, we will not only elucidate particular issues, as was done this past week, but we can work together as friends and colleagues and bring out the best ideas and participate in debate of the kind that was originally contemplated in this Chamber.

Again, I thank the debaters. As was indicated, we intend to do this about once a month, and we hope everybody will tune in again. With that, I think we have a wrap-up request.

For the time being, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REAL MEDICARE REFORM IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT OBSTRUCTIONISM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, for 3 continuous days last week we focused

on the obstructions imposed over the past year against President Bush's circuit court nominees by the Democratic minority in the Senate. The Senate obstructionism has claimed victims, and unless we break their holds, more highly qualified legal scholars will be lost due to their ongoing obstructionism.

Obstructionism is not just for judges anymore. It has been used also against the Healthy Forests Act, a bill that was approved while the southern California fires raged on but was subjected to obstructionism by a minority when it was time to go to conference.

Now our seniors are on the verge of receiving a new Medicare prescription drug benefit unless the Senate chooses to obstruct it. After 38 years of broken promises, a real Medicare drug benefit is right around the corner. Opponents claim that reforms in the Medicare conference are too great and the spending too little. I disagree. Seniors have waited too long and this bill does too much for it to be subjected to obstructionism.

As I indicated a moment ago, after 38 years of broken promises our seniors will finally get a Medicare drug benefit unless the Senate obstructs it. After 38 years of delay, help can begin in as soon as 6 months unless the Senate obstructs it.

Looking at the second chart, this Medicare bill will provide unprecedented resources for seniors' prescription drug benefits, almost one and a half times what President Clinton proposed and a third more than Senate Democrats wanted just 2 years ago, and we will have all of this unless the Senate obstructs it.

Looking at the third chart, the Medicare bill will cover nearly all prescription drug costs for low-income seniors—nearly all prescription drug costs for low-income seniors. This is a terrific deal for our low-income elderly in America. We will have this unless the Senate obstructs it.

This Medicare bill will cover nearly all catastrophic drug costs for seniors with high drug bills—nearly all catastrophic costs for seniors with high prescription drug bills. Let me say that again. This Medicare bill will cover 95 percent of catastrophic costs for seniors with high prescription drug bills. This is a good deal for America's seniors and we will have this unless the Senate obstructs it.

The Medicare bill will give seniors unprecedented choices. All of these new choices in yellow on this chart are choices that are not available to seniors today. Senior will have all of these new choices, both the drug plan as well as comprehensive health plans with choices that Federal workers currently enjoy, unless the Senate obstructs it.

The Medicare bill will use competition to stop waste and abuse and give seniors group purchasing power. A specialty cane that Medicare pays \$44 for is purchased by the VA for \$15. That waste of Medicare and retirees' money will stop unless the Senate obstructs it.

This is a picture of that cane, for which Medicare currently overpays, that the VA can get for a mere \$15. Medicare pays \$44. All of this kind of waste will stop unless the Senate obstructs this bill.

The Medicare bill will protect seniors by keeping the drug benefits both available and voluntary. Let me just say that again. This Medicare bill will keep seniors' drug benefits both voluntary and available. Retirees can keep what they have or get help to maintain their employer-based plans, can get a drug benefit through traditional Medicare, will get new choices in improved Medicare, will be protected by a Government backup plan and substantial resources to make sure the choices are really there, not just on paper but choices that are really there. Seniors get all of this protection unless the Senate obstructs it.

This Medicare bill will protect Medicare for tomorrow's seniors by controlling costs and preserving the system. While the bill provides an unprecedented amount of resources—again, almost one and a half times what President Clinton proposed and a third more than Senate Democrats wanted just 2 years ago—the bill requires that costs be monitored to control spending in excess of \$400 billion. The bill adds competitive forces to drive down costs, reward efficiency, eliminate waste and abuse, and weed out fraud so that Medicare will be preserved for our children. All of this will happen unless the Senate obstructs this measure.

Finally, looking at chart 9, the Medicare bill provides real resources, real benefits, real health, real choice, real protections, real competition, and real cost control. All of those items are in this measure, and we will have a chance to approve it later this week.

After 38 years, seniors will finally get a good prescription drug benefit unless the Senate obstructs it. I think it is the poorest and frailest seniors who will suffer enormously from more obstructionism this time against this Medicare prescription drug bill.

So that is where we are. This is a great new plan that will be before the Senate later this week, an opportunity to really help seniors with prescription drugs for the first time, after years of conversation. Let us not miss that opportunity.

I yield the floor.

RECENT BROADCAST FLAG REGULATIONS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I rise today to commend the Federal Communications Commission for its continuing work on the important broadcast flag regulations. Over-the-air television remains a critical part of the distribution of American television, and these regulations help to promote and improve over-the-air broadcasting of high quality digital programming. They do this by giving broadcasters the tools they need to protect their digital